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SUBJECT: ICRC'S GLOOMY OUTLOOK ON GOU COOPERATION

REF: TASHKENT 1448 AND PREVIOUS (NOTAL)

Classified By: P/E Section Chief Ted Burkhalter; resons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) Summary: ICRC's Head of Regional Delegation for Central Asia, Yves Giovannoni, met Ambassador October 5 and expressed concern at continuing lack of cooperation from the GOU, including on prison access. Giovannoni said ICRC was no longer willing to be used for political advantage by the GOU and might have to downgrade its Uzbekistan office at some point. He suggested the ICRC could, in theory, play a role in "moving past Andijon," but doubted the security services' willingness to cooperate. End summary.

12. (C) Ambassador on October 5 called on Yves Giovannoni, the new Head of ICRC's Regional Delegation in Central Asia, and his deputy, Raffaello Muller. Giovannoni stressed that ICRC was downgrading its mission in Tajikistan and that it would have to draw a line in Uzbekistan at some point. ICRC had, he said, allowed a piecemeal approach previously in Uzbekistan, and had tried to work with the GOU on issues like prison access. The GOU had taken advantage of ICRC, using events for political advantage, and ICRC was no longer willing to tolerate this. ICRC was not willing to compromise on the application in Uzbekistan of worldwide modalities.

13. (C) Giovannoni said that the EU carried little influence with the GOU and that, with the deterioration of the U.S.-Uzbek relationship, U.S. leverage had also been lost. Muller added that, while he believed Uzbekistan's political class cared about its international image, the Ministry of Interior (MVD) and National Security Service (NSS) understood neither the humanitarian purpose nor the confidentiality procedures of the ICRC. The MVD and NSS, he said, cared only about their assigned mission objectives (i.e., fighting extremism) and had a blank check from Karimov to do what they needed to do.

14. (C) Muller complained that when applying for visas for its personnel, the ICRC must submit to the GOU detailed agendas, including for internal training and seminars. Giovannoni noted that because of difficulties with the authorities, ICRC has been forced to cut back its budget for Uzbekistan. He compared the problems here with those ICRC faced in its now-reduced Tajikistan office.

15. (C) Both Giovannoni and Muller told Ambassador of difficulties ICRC has encountered in its contact work. After the 2005 Andijon events, Muller said, the GOU had ordered ICRC to refrain from travelling to the Ferghana Valley. The

ICRC had been forbidden from spreading the word that it could place refugees and their families in contact with one another. Muller also described how, slowly, the number of individuals coming to visit ICRC in its Tashkent offices had dropped. International NGOs, he said, had noted the same trend around that time. Based on a pattern of cancelled appointments and no-shows, he believed that ICRC's phones were monitored and that individuals who phoned ICRC were then being discouraged from maintaining contact. He believed this practice remained in force.

¶6. (C) Giovannoni thought that ICRC could play a useful role (as he put it) in "moving past Andijon," but he doubted the security services would cooperate. He noted EU attitudes had shifted and that many - if not most - EU diplomats thought an investigation into Andijon now simply impossible. He agreed and thought ICRC could play a role, for example, in training Uzbek security forces to respond more appropriately in future security crises. However, he confirmed the existence of deep mutual suspicion and distrust between the GOU and ICRC. He appreciated Ambassador's having raised with First Deputy FM Nematov the issue of ICRC access, but was pessimistic that the GOU would cooperate. He thought the subject was best not raised again prior to the December 23 elections.

¶7. (C) At the end of the day, the best Giovannoni and Muller could muster was the hope that ICRC could keep its foot in the door, so that it could be prepared if a humanitarian situation arose.

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